The Music of Steve Reich

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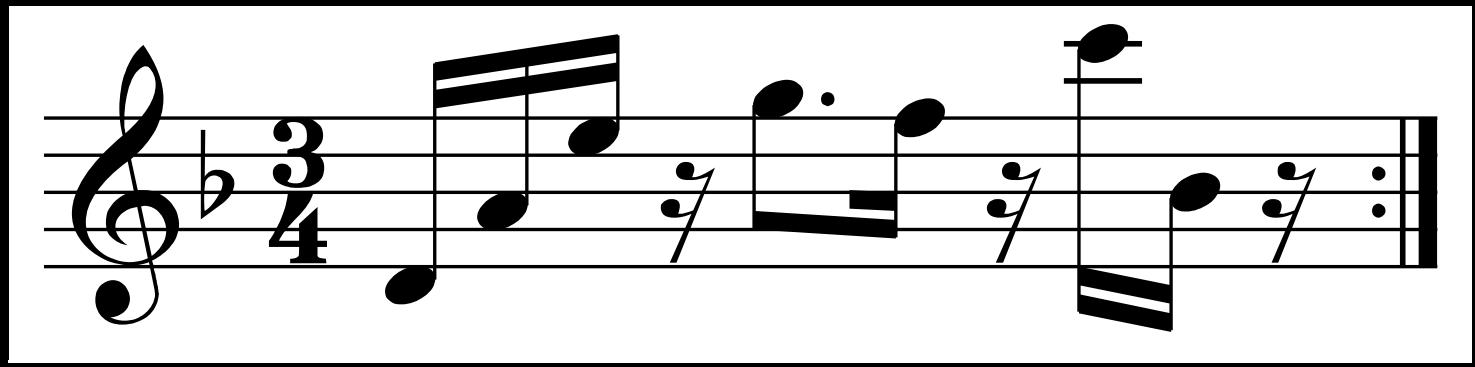
Introduction

- American classical composer (b. 1936)
- Born and raised in NYC
- Studied philosophy at Cornell University, music at the Juilliard School and Mills College
- Known primarily as a “minimalist” composer
- Music is based on repetitive melodic patterns in *canon* (overlapping, staggered in time) with a strong rhythmic drive
- Has written music for drums and other percussion, piano, string quartet, and orchestra

My research

- Interested in how Reich shapes trajectories through the use of nominally limited musical materials
- How does Reich sustain interest and achieve such variety with these materials?
- What musical elements *do* is just as important as what they *are*
- Developed an interpretive, analytical framework of three principal actions:
  - Building up
  - Staying steady
  - Changing
- Each interacts/reacts to one another
- Allows for a detailed way of observing what the music is doing

Vermont Counterpoint (1982) for flute and tape



Vermont Counterpoint (1982) for flute and tape

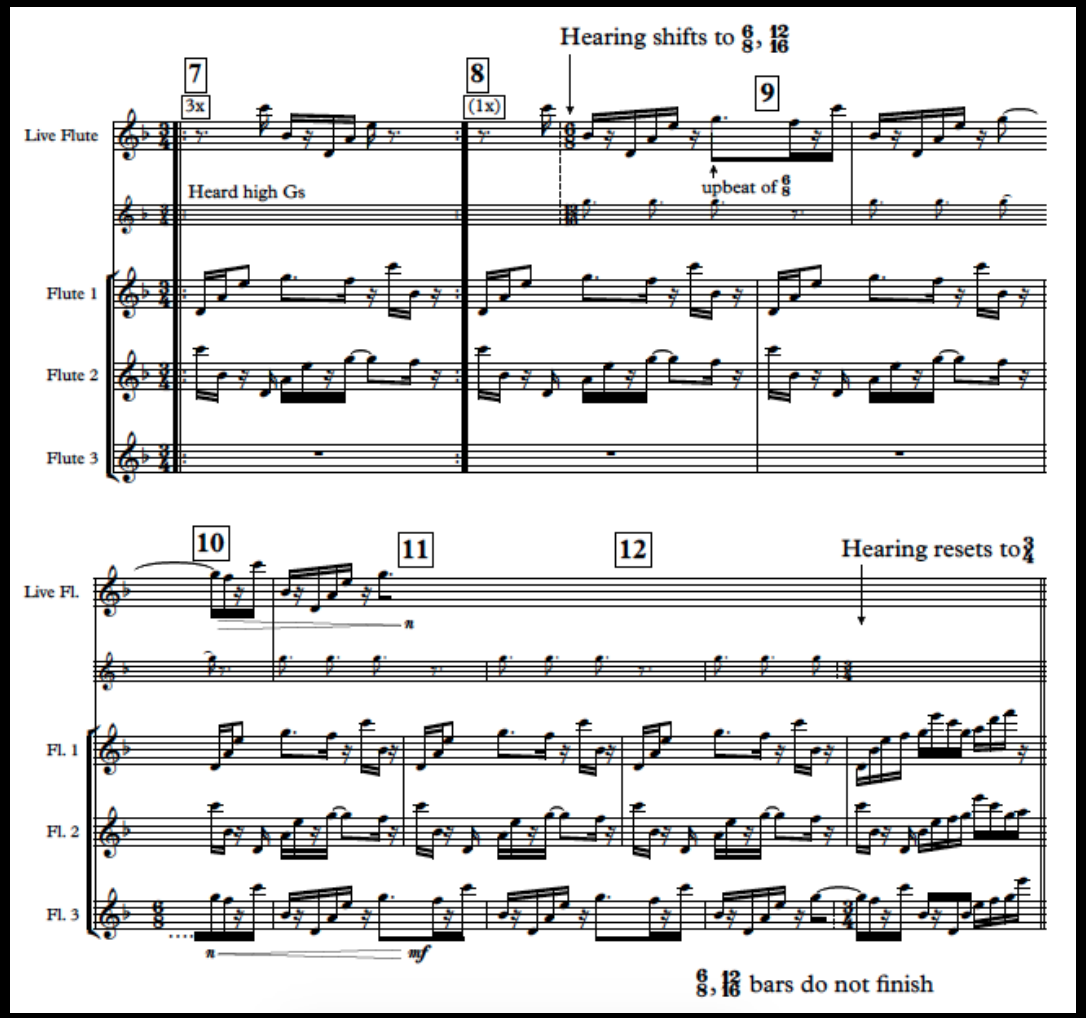
Building up:

- Melodic pattern is presented in the first part and repeated
- Pattern is copied in the second part in canon, but built up note by note to completion; repeated
- Pattern is built up and repeated in the third part in the same manner; first layer is completed

Changing:

- Combination of three parts causes certain high notes to “jump out” of the texture, creating a temporary disruption in the meter
- Melodic pattern expands

Vermont Counterpoint (1982) for flute and tape



Vermont Counterpoint (1982) for flute and tape

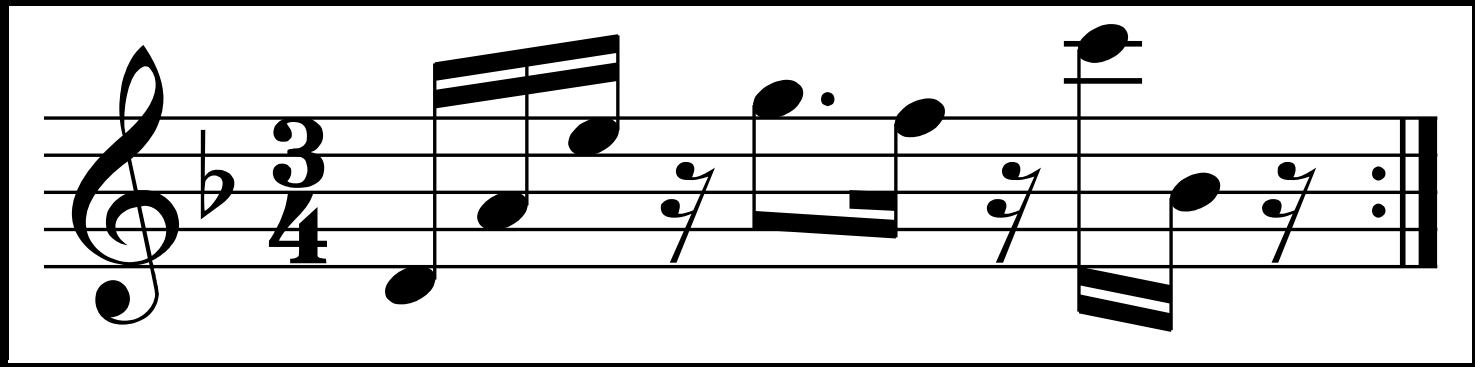
Staying steady:

- Upon the melodic pattern expanding, the corresponding layer keeps repeating while…

Building up:

- Different patterns are built up note by note in the second and third layers simultaneously, but at a faster pace

Vermont Counterpoint (1982) for flute and tape



Happy listening!

Questions? Comments? jrjedlic@iu.edu